

MHR *Connections*

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Beatrice Watson worked at IWAM for 15 years before accepting a position with the Commission. She is also the immediate past president of the IWAM Board.

Commission employee receives award

Congratulations to Beatrice Watson, the Commission's Outreach and Liaison officer. On March 22, 2012, at the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba's 30th anniversary celebration at Government House, Beatrice received an award for her "outstanding passion and dedication for the Immigrant Women's Association." The Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba (IWAM) was established in 1983 to help immigrant women and their families settle and integrate

into Canadian society. Its mission is to break down barriers by promoting multicultural values to create understanding and respect among Canadians. The organization has established counselling programs and English as a second language courses. It also is involved with research and advocacy.

Supreme Court hears case challenging treatment of special needs students

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is one of 17 groups granted intervener status in the appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada of *Moore v BC (Ministry of Education) and School District 44 (North Vancouver)*. The Appeal, which was heard on March 22, 2012, concerns whether the School District of North Vancouver and the BC Ministry of Education discriminated against Jeffrey Moore, a severely dyslexic student by failing to provide him with meaningful access to an appropriate education.

"The Supreme Court of Canada hearing is a unique opportunity to advance the rights of students with learning disabilities across Canada," says Isha Khan, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission's Legal Counsel, adding that "ruling

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The Rights Connection by Jerry Woods - Chairperson Tomorrow is another day

Earlier this month, in the Brandon Sun, a reader wrote that declaring March 21 the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination suggested that on March 22, racism would no longer exist. With this in mind, the writer declared the day a joke. This of course is not the premise of March 21, although wouldn't it be great if we could wake up one morning and find racism no longer existed?

The following example sadly reveals that racism continues in our society, and in this case, it comes in the form of racial profiling.

Earlier this month the Ontario Court of Appeal reviewed the case of a black letter carrier named Ronald Phipps. Mr. Phipps was making his rounds in an affluent Toronto neighbourhood, when at the same time Police Officer Michael Shaw was told to look out for white men, travelling in a vehicle, and suspected of cutting telephone lines.

Even though Mr. Phipps was carrying a letter bag and was wearing a Canada Post uniform, Officer Shaw stopped and questioned him and ran his name through a police check. He also questioned a homeowner and a white letter carrier in the area seeking more information about Mr. Phipps. One would naturally ask why.

According to Officer Shaw, he suspected the uniform was a ruse and that as a police officer he had a "legitimate role and duty to investigate circumstances of possible wrongdoing."

Fortunately the Court recognized that the officer's actions were motivated by race. Mr. Phipps was an unknown black man in an affluent neighbourhood. With only this information, the officer determined that he might have a criminal purpose.

Racism will continue to exist as long as assumptions are made based on race, colour, ancestry, or religion, rather than on reasonable suspicions.

For the foreseeable future, we will not see an end to racism. But if human rights groups, individuals and the courts continue to send the elimination of racism message, March 21 will remain a goal worth realizing.

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on an allegation of systemic discrimination will be of immense value to human rights commissions who promote, protect and advocate equality of all Canadians."

According to Ms Khan the essence of this case is about equal access to public services. She adds that the "goal is levelling the playing field for persons with disabilities."

In 2010 almost 10% of complaints of discrimination on the basis of disability registered at the Manitoba Human Rights Commission contained allegations of systemic discrimination.

When Jeffrey Moore was in elementary public school, between 1992 and 1995, his family believed that because of

funding cuts for special needs education, he was not receiving sufficient services which would have allowed him to become functionally literate. At the beginning of grade 4, Jeffrey was placed by his parents at their expense in an independent school specializing in teaching students with learning disabilities (LD).

In 1997, the Moores filed a complaint with the BC Human Rights Tribunal, claiming that Jeffrey and other students

Ms Khan says that in recent years more than half the complaints based on disability received by the Commission have allegations of a failure to reasonably accommodate a disability.

like him had been discriminated against and sought reimbursement for their education expenses as well as other remedies. A decision in 2005 by the BC Human Rights Tribunal found that the Ministry of Education and the School District had discriminated against students with LD including Jeffrey, by cutting funding and services and by not providing meaningful access to public education services.

The Ministry and the School District appealed the Tribunal decision to the BC Supreme Court and the Tribunal decision was overturned, finding that no discrimination occurred. The Moores appealed this decision to the BC Court of Appeal and the appeal was heard by a panel of 3 judges. Two judges, forming a majority, dismissed the appeal but the third judge gave a written dissent in favour of the Moores. The Moores were granted leave to appeal the BC Court of Appeal decision to the Supreme Court of Canada in December 2011.

Another intervener, the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC), has appeared at every level of the Moore claim. The organization is represented by its volunteer lead lawyer, Yude Henteleff, C.M., Q.C., a prominent and nationally respected human rights expert and advocate in Winnipeg. Mr. Henteleff has advocated at each hearing for the right of children with learning disabilities to services, which enables meaningful access to education as provided to all other children.

"The goal is levelling the playing field..."

Isha Khan

Book documents successes of Manitobans with Disabilities

A new booklet looking at the past four decades of achievements by people with disabilities deals with both physical changes in our environment and attitude changes in our society.

Although "The Voice of People with Disabilities: Making a Difference in Manitoba - 2012" is described as a booklet, the 275 pages of historical accomplishments and future endeavours documented by the many contributors is much more.

"The Voice of People with Disabilities: Making a Difference in Manitoba" is a compilation of personal reflections featuring topics ranging from inclusion, education and work, transportation and human rights. The contributors write and speak from the heart about their personal experiences and accomplishments as well as the achievement of others.

The Voice of People with Disabilities: Making a Difference in Manitoba was compiled by the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, the Disabilities Issues Office of Manitoba and the Council of Canadians with Disabilities with the generous support of the Allan Simpson Memorial Fund, managed by the Winnipeg Foundation.

An electronic copy of this booklet can be found on the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities website: www.mlpd.mb.ca.

Yvonne Peters, current Vice Chairperson of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, is seen here in 1980 protesting on Parliament Hill. In the book Ms Peters writes, "We attracted significant media because the sight of people with a variety of disabilities shouting for their right was quite a new concept in Canadian society."

Hundreds of people flocked to the Legislature to participate in the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council's annual celebration of International Women's Day. Women in Business took centre stage at this year's event.

According to research women entrepreneurs are one of the fastest growing segments of our economy and represent a rising economic force. The event's guest speaker, Sandra Altner, CEO of the Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba, shared her journey in business world from a small shop on Osborne Street in the Village to a women's clothing boutique on Portage Avenue.

To mark this year's event seven business women were honoured for their contribution to the Manitoba economy.

The women are profiled in the *Women Helping Women in Business* publication from the Manitoba Status of Women Division at www.gov.mb.ca/msw/publications.